

Use or Avoid? The Perceptions of Prospective English Teachers in Turkey about L1 Use in English Classes

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Abstract

This paper following a mixed-method research design investigates the role of L1 use in L2 teaching from the perspectives of Turkish prospective English teachers. Data were collected from 374 Turkish prospective teachers in ELT department of four state universities in Turkey through a questionnaire. It was aimed to obtain a general view about whether Turkish should be used in teaching English; and if used, to what extent it should be used in the situations specified in the questionnaire, and for what purposes Turkish should be used in these situations. According to the results of the study, some of the participants proposed that L1 use should have no place in language learning/teaching since it exists as a barrier to the process of language learning and hinders the exposure to L2 and the chance to practice it whereas a great majority of them (N=243) considered L1 use as a contributing factor to ease the process of language learning and comprehension of learners.

Keywords: L1 use, L2 use, L2 class, Teaching English

1. Introduction

A continuous debate on L1 use in L2 classrooms seems to be never over. On the one hand, a number of researchers and theorists advocate the use of merely L2 in L2 classroom (e.g., Edstrom, 2009; Macdonald, 1993); on the other hand, there are many supporters of the view that avoidance of L1 can lead a tension between learners and teachers, and the exclusion of L1 may, thus, be inappropriate and impossible in many situations (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Cook, 2001; Mirza, Mahmud, & Jabbar, 2012). In other words, whereas some researchers believe that L1 use plays an important role in reducing classroom anxiety and helps to create a comfortable learning atmosphere (Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney, 2008) and that it is also easier and communicatively more effective particularly for shy learners or those who feel less proficient in L2 (Nation, 2003), most of them warn about its overuse since it may result in over-dependency on L1.

L1 use may be regarded as an obstacle to the creation of an effective learning environment since it probably makes learning process under-challenging and reduces concentration. Furthermore, L1 use may result in comfort; nonetheless, if this comfort becomes excessive, it can be transformed into laziness; that is, comfort, first being an advantage of L1 use, may become a disadvantage in the process (Edstrom, 2009). In this sense, it is commonly believed that avoidance of L1 use in L2 classroom might be beneficial since its use probably hinders the learning process of L2 or affects it negatively. However, the dilemma of whether L1 should be used in L2 classroom might not reach a conclusion with this thought; on the contrary, it has become an unresolved issue that raises a need to carry out new studies in the light of different language contexts. According to Cook (2001), "it is time to open a door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over 100 years, namely, the systematic use of the first language (L1) in the classroom" (p. 403).

1.1 Use or Avoid L1?

The debate behind L1 use while teaching/learning L2 seems to remain as a non-conclusive issue as long as some researchers, on the one hand, advocate L1 use and regard it an indispensable part of language learning process (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Cook, 2001; Mirza, Mahmud, & Jabbar, 2012; Nation, 2003; Schweers Jr, 1999) and others, on the other hand, substantially reject its use since it may hinder this process rather than facilitating (Macdonald, 1993). In this sense, there are two approaches - monolingual approach and bilingual approach. Whereas monolingual approach supports that what determines learning is the quantity of exposure to the target language

itself, the latter focuses on the fact that the use of learners' mother tongue helps learners. In other words, those advocating monolingual approach believe that since L2 and L1 learning have some common features, particularly in terms of process, it is of great importance to prevent negative transfer from L1 knowledge to L2 learning through maximum exposure to L2 and least exposure to L1 (Krashen, 1981). For instance, according to Macdonald (1993), it is needless to use L1 or translation in language learning process; instead, the use of simple words and structures of the target language can be sufficient to guide learners so as to infer or reveal the meanings of unknown phrases, abstract words, and most difficult expressions in the target language. However, the theorists supporting bilingual approach contrarily criticize the complete exclusion of L1 from L2 classes and rather emphasize a reasonable and proper use of L1 (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Thompson & Harrison, 2014; White & Storch, 2012). In his study reviewing monolingual strategies in multilingual classes, Cummins (2007) provided three instructional assumptions such as (i) exclusive use of target language, (ii) no translation between L1 and L2; and (iii) keeping two languages rigidly separate but got almost no evidence for the effectiveness of these strategies; instead, using bilingual instructional strategies "together with monolingual strategies in a balanced and complementary way" was found more efficient (p. 221). Similarly, according to Creese and Blackledge (2010), students following certain 'bilingual strategies' may create 'translanguaging'- shifting between L1 and L2. For example, while producing L2 utterances, students sometimes need to take help from their first language in order to convey messages in the target language. Moreover, the study by Celik (2008), presenting a brief snapshot of the views regarding the use of L1 while teaching L2, concluded that L1, if used properly, may have a facilitating role in the process of L2 learning rather than being a barrier to it.

Many studies on students and teachers' attitudes toward L1 use in L2 classes in different language contexts have demonstrated that both teachers and students supported the use of L1 while teaching L2. For instance, Schweers Jr (1999), in his study on the use of Spanish (L1) in teaching English (L2) found out that almost all of the students believed that L1 should be used in English classes since it may provide better understanding of L2 texts. He also suggested that using L1 enabled the learners to develop positive attitudes toward English and also encouraged them to learn more English because they probably felt more comfortable, less tense and less lost when using L1; on the contrary, the complete elimination of L1 from L2 class might be very frustrating particularly for lower-level learners.

In another similar study on students and teachers' attitudes towards using Arabic (L1) in L2 class, Al-Nofaie (2010) illustrated that both students and teachers supported L1 use. Although teachers emphasized the importance of L1 in their classes, they, at the same time, warned about the improper and excessive use of L1; however, students preferred L1 to be used in many situations. Likewise, Alshammari (2011) indicated that a judicious and well-timed use of Arabic (L1) in L2 classroom by both teachers and students might have some very useful results particularly in terms of increasing learners' comprehension. In addition, for those learners whose language proficiency is lower, L1 use can be an important device in language learning particularly as it can serve as a means to save time and increase learners' motivation (Cianflone, 2009).

However, according to Levine (2003), in contrast to instructors, students seemed to use less target language and instead prefers first language; moreover, if used, it was generally used while speaking with their instructor rather than their classmates. Besides some factors such as activity type (Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002), lack of time, problems with classroom management, linguistic limitation of nonnative teachers (Bateman, 2008), which have impact on the use of target language, language preference of students in class also seems to depend on the language, first language or target language, used by the teacher (Thompson & Harrison, 2014).

1.2 When or Why is L1 Used?

Besides the researchers, like Franke and Sauveur (cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001), who advocate Direct Method, a kind of monolingual approach in which mother tongue is avoided and target language is presented in contexts **generally** through realia, there are also a number of researchers who stand on the opposite side proposing that proper and reasonable use of L1 can be very beneficial to fulfill some specific purposes. For instance, Atkinson (1987), Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002), Cianflone (2009), and Littlewood and Yu (2011) suggest various functions of L1 use and are in favor of its limited use particularly for adult learners.

In their study, Mirza et al. (2012) revealed that L1 (Bangla) is preferred by teachers of tertiary level in English language teaching classes particularly when presenting complex grammar structures and new vocabulary and expressions, giving instructions to students, etc. In her study examining the functions of L1 in Turkish-EFL classes through audio-recorded observations of lessons and semi-structured interviews with teachers in a secondary school in Turkey, Sali (2014) demonstrated that teachers used L1 for either academic (to communicate the content of the lesson) or managerial (to regulate efficient classroom interaction) purposes.

Through a close and iterative examination of the data collected from college students in Saudi Arabia, Storch and Aldosari (2010) identified a working list of possible applications of L1 as: task management, discussing and generating ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics deliberations. Moreover, Littlewood and Yu (2011) investigating for what purposes English teachers use L1 (Cantonese or Putonghua) in Hong Kong (HK) and Mainland China (MC) have suggested that teachers switch to their L1 particularly when “establishing constructive social relationships”, “communicating complex meanings to ensure understanding and/or save time (‘explaining difficult grammar’ for the MC group, ‘giving the meaning of unknown words’ for the HK group)”, and “maintaining control over the classroom environment” (p. 68). Similarly, Brooks-Lewis (2009) advocated that the L1 can be a useful resource in FL teaching to promote student confidence in the classroom and to make ‘learning meaningful and easier’ (p. 234). In addition to learning purposes, L1 is also used to make the learning environment enjoyable so as to encourage the students to engage with L2 (De La Campa & Nassaji, 2009).

In the light of these studies, it is clear that L1 is used by both teachers and learners for a variety of reasons and purposes such as grammar instruction (Edstrom, 2006; Levine, 2003; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Mirza et al., 2012; Storch & Aldosari, 2010), explanation of vocabulary (White & Storch, 2012), classroom management (Bateman, 2008; Edstrom, 2006; Littlewood & Yu, 2011), giving instructions in classroom activities (Lo, 2015; Mirza et al., 2012; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003), providing an enjoyable learning environment (De La Campa & Nassaji, 2009), giving feedback to students (Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005), fostering collaborative interaction (Qian, Tian, & Wang, 2009; Scott & Fuente, 2008) and so forth. However, there is still no consensus about the use of L1 in L2 classes in that while some researchers support maximum L2 use and limited or no L1 use, others criticize banning L1 from L2 classes and emphasize a proper and well-timed use of it.

As it is in all other countries where English is taught as a foreign or second language, the use of L1 (Turkish) in the process of teaching English is common in Turkey as well. However, the studies conducted on the students and teachers’ attitudes toward the use of Turkish in English classroom are unfortunately few and far between (Kayaoğlu, 2012; Sali, 2014; Sariçoban, 2010). Therefore, the present study that aims to reveal the prospective teachers’ attitudes toward Turkish use while teaching English is an attempt to get to advance research in the field and fill the gap in the Turkish context. This study also aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the perceptions of Turkish prospective teachers in ELT department on the use of Turkish while teaching English?
 - a) Should teachers use Turkish in English teaching?
- 2) For what purposes should Turkish be used in English classrooms?
- 3) To what extent should Turkish be used in the situations specified in this study?

2. Methodology

We followed a survey design that is used “to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population”(Creswell, 2005, p. 354) by using a questionnaire.

2.1 Data Collection and Instruments

As a data collection instrument, we applied a questionnaire since it “is relatively economical, has the same questions for all subjects, and can ensure anonymity” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 194). We adopted it from the questionnaire in the study of Anh (2010) about the Vietnamese university teachers’ attitudes toward the use of Vietnamese in English language teaching. In this sense, some minor changes were made in both wording (e.g. Turkish instead of Vietnamese) and format. The questionnaire consists of eight five-Likert scale questions ranging from 5 (always) to 1 (never) and an open-ended question on why L1 use should be avoided besides the completion of sentences to explain the reasons why Turkish should be used in those situations specified in the questionnaire (e.g. explaining new words because...). However, just those participants who responded the question whether Turkish should be used in English classes as “No” answered the open-ended question and thus by providing the reason why it should not be used completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire was applied in English and to the student teachers at ELT departments of four different state universities in the 2015-2016 academic year.

2.2 Data Analysis

The quantitative data were computed into and analyzed by IBM-SPSS 20.0 for descriptive results. The qualitative data obtained through the responses of those students who rejected L1 use in English classes and the explanations of the others for Turkish use in the situations specified in the questionnaire were analyzed in the light of content analysis which enables the researcher to make “replicable and valid inferences from texts to the

contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). All codes and categories were also checked by a third researcher.

2.3 Participants

As seen in Table 1, a total of 374 student teachers (89 male and 285 female) from four different state universities in different regions of Turkey responded the questionnaire. Their ages ranged between 18 and 33 years and except for two students whose mother tongues are Turkmen, all other students reported to have the same L1-Turkish.

Table 1. The participants

Gender	N	Age	Number of years of studying English
Male	89	18-33	3-16
Mean		21,11	7,67
Female	285	18-30	3-20
Mean		20,47	8,22
TOTAL	374		

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the quantitative data were descriptively displayed in Table 2. It demonstrates that 65,2% (243 student teachers) of the participants are of the opinion that Turkish should be used in the process of English teaching. However, 34,8% (131 student teachers) of them do not advocate Turkish use in English classes. It can be said that the number of those who support avoidance of L1 use is not low at all. First, the views of the participants who reject L1 use are presented, and then explanations of others who believe that L1 should take part in language learning process are explained in detail. The excerpts from the participants for the related codes and categories are presented with the number of the participant (e.g. P1).

Table 2. Participants' attitudes toward the use of L1 (Turkish)

		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
Should teachers use <i>Turkish</i> in teaching English?	Male	54	60,7	35	39,3
	Female	189	66,7	96	33,3
	Total	243	65,2	131	34,8

The participants who believe Turkish use is not beneficial in English classes also explained why they think it should not be used; however, five of them did not provide any specific reasons. We presented only one category involving all codes; therefore, the responses were interpreted under the codes submitted in the table below.

Table 3. Reasons why Turkish should not be used in English classes

Category	Codes	Frequency
Negative impact of L1 use	L1 use....	
	decreases the amount of exposure to target language (English)	38
	restricts opportunity to make practice	38
	blinds speaking ability	19
	makes students lazy	9
	exists as a barrier to language learning	9
	becomes a bad habit formation	6
	limits teaching in real atmosphere	6
	inhibits L2 acquisition	6
	ignores differences between English and Turkish	5
	leads to some problems	2
TOTAL	138*	

*Some of the participants reported more than one reason.

As seen in the table, most of the students who do not support the use of Turkish in English classes mostly believe that learners should be exposed to the target language as much as possible. In their opinion, only when they hear, read or write in the target language, they can learn it accurately and efficiently. For instance, one of the students stated that:

We are learning a new language. Because of that, teachers should not use Turkish. Maybe, at first it [the use of target language] can be difficult but I think it will be more effective (P-190).

Similarly, another student points out that Turkish should be avoided in the process of language learning as much as possible; instead, L2 should gain dominance in English classes and his words clearly illustrate this explanation:

Exposure to target language accommodates the learning process. The use of L1 should be limited as much as possible to direct learners' cognitive functions towards the target language. Although it can be tough [difficult] to get it started with a proper feedback chain and reinforcement, L2 can be dominant in classes (P-215).

Besides, several students stated that they should try to speak English as much as possible to be able to practice and improve their new language and that the class is the only place to have a chance to talk and listen to English since they always speak Turkish in other places and English has almost no place in daily life. The following statement is a good example:

Learning English as a second language needs practice. If one learns it in a country where another language is spoken, for instance in Turkey, s/he has no chance to speak English in everyday life. So, class is the only place where they can practice and hear [English]. English teacher's speaking English [If a teacher speaks English, it] will be very beneficial (P-32).

Moreover, some participants believe that besides wiping out the opportunity to make practice, the use of L1 also hinders thinking in the target language and thus blinds the skill of speaking. As long as they speak Turkish instead of English in L2 classes, they cannot improve their English particularly in terms of speaking. On the contrary, if they are encouraged to think in English and use just it in class, they will have to produce something in English. It was illustrated by one of the participants as follows:

If students are asked to speak Turkish, it will not help them to improve themselves in terms of being a good speaker of English. They won't [will not] have a chance to think as the way [the] English do (P-291).

In line with their experience of learning English, some participants also stated that teaching English through the use of Turkish just fosters grammar teaching but not teaching other skills particularly speaking. One participant (P-301) clarifies it with his words as follows:

I have been taught by my English teachers in my mother tongue, and so, I think I am bad at speaking English. My teachers only tried to teach grammar; they don't [did not] emphasize [focus] on making students speak (P-301).

Furthermore, some students believe that since Turkish is their own language, it is much easier to speak or

produce something in it. If teachers use or allow the students to use their mother tongue, they will not exert themselves to speak or use target language; instead, they will go on expressing themselves in their L1 (Turkish). In other words, switching to Turkish in English classes makes the learners lazy and constrains them from using the target language. One student clearly stated that:

If Turkish is used in the class, students will not be willing to express their ideas by using English and they will tend to use Turkish in every difficult situation they encounter (P-224).

Another reason provided by the student teachers why Turkish should not be used in English language teaching is that it is regarded as a barrier to the process of language learning. According to these students, Turkish probably hinders and decelerates this process rather than facilitating. The case was exemplified by one of the students' words:

When Turkish is used as a second source for better understanding in teaching English, the students can get accustomed to using our [their] mother tongue rather than the target language. So, proficiency and efficacy in L2 will take longer time than usual (P-285).

Likewise, one of the participants stated that:

Using Turkish hinders English learning; it does not help in this process (P-171).

Another idea obtained through the responses of the participants is that L1 use becomes a bad habit formation; that is, some of the participants reject L1 use in L2 classes as they believe that if teachers or learners always use mother tongue, they may get accustomed to using only L1. The words of two participants are good examples:

It leads to bad habit formation. L2 should be used as it enables them to speak English (P-175).

It causes bad habit formation and the learners want to speak Turkish in the future (P-183).

Similarly, some student teachers are of the opinion that a foreign or second language should be taught in a natural atmosphere so as to provide effective and permanent learning and that aim can be achieved through the mere use of L2. As stated in the following extract, while teaching English, teachers should use only English and thus provide real language learning environment through authentic materials in the target language:

If we want to teach the language in a natural way like [as] they learn [their] L1, we should not use Turkish. English can be learned in [using] the same language and the same culture (P-173).

Moreover, L1 use in language classes is also rejected by some participants since it inhibits acquisition of L2. They assert that we acquire our mother tongue using it everywhere and every time, so we should learn a new language in the same way particularly if we want to speak accurately and fluently. The importance of L2 use in L2 classes was demonstrated by the words of a participant:

Because acquisition is highly important for students in the process of language learning ... Students should be exposed to English all the time (P-178).

Another student also stated that:

If we want to acquire English, our first language should not be used during the class (P-302).

Some of the students who reject the use of Turkish in English classes stated that differences between Turkish and English languages and cultures might lead to some problems in the class. They are also of the opinion that if Turkish is used instead of English while teaching English, students may transfer some structures or items from their own language to their target language, which results in negative transfer and blocks their learning processes. The following examples simply illustrate that:

English is a different language from ours. Therefore, learners may be confused about the phonological and grammatical features between the target language and first language (P-324).

Because sometimes using L1 in the class can make students be confused due to the differences between two languages, it can cause some problems such as interlingual problems. Day by day students will get used to using English even if they feel shy at the beginning of the process (P-166).

The last reason presented by the participants for why L1 use should be avoided in L2 class is that it probably leads to some problems. They believe that if students or teachers always use first language, they may encounter some problems resulting from the context where they learn the target language. That was simply summarized by one of the participants (P-195) as follows:

If the target language is English, there is no logical reason to use the first language. All of the students must be exposed to language [target language]. Otherwise, they need much more exercises, and it causes some problems

since they do not live in native speakers' area (P-195).

In compatible with the views of the researchers who advocate monolingual approach and naturally the mere use of L2 (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Krashen, 1982 etc.), some of the participants object to the use of L1 since they believe that using only L2 in the class increases the chance of exposure to the target language, to make practice, and thus develops confidence in speaking and listening skills. Similarly, the use of L1 may contrarily blind speaking ability and make the students lazy; thus, they regard L1 as a barrier to the process of language learning. In consistent with Macdonald (1993), the student teachers assert that L2 should be acquired in real atmosphere through its authentic use; therefore, instead of L1 use or translation, explaining those structures or words the students have difficulty comprehending through simple words may be sufficient to provide them with clues to infer or grab the meaning and there is no need to use L1 or translation. Furthermore, the participants also believe that differences between Turkish and English may result in negative transfer that hinders language learning and leads to some problems.

In contrast to those who reject L1 use, the number of the student teachers who believe that L1 should be used in L2 class is quite high. Table 4 demonstrates their attitudes to what extent L1 should be used in particular situations:

Table 4. Students' attitudes to what extent Turkish should be used in those situations specified in the questionnaire

While.....	N	Mean	SD
explaining new words	243	3,06	1,10
explaining grammatical points	243	3,41	1,00
giving instructions about activities	243	2,67	1,12
checking for understanding	243	2,88	1,27
giving feedback to individuals	243	2,78	1,14
joking with students	243	2,76	1,09
discussing classroom methods	243	2,96	1,06
testing (e.g., doing translation tests)	243	2,85	1,17
Valid N (listwise)	243		

Table 4 illustrates the participants' attitudes toward Turkish use, particularly for what purposes and to what extent Turkish should be used while teaching English. Only those participants who answered the question regarding L1 use in L2 class as "Yes" went on responding the following questions in the questionnaire. They were asked to choose the number that best matches their attitude toward using Turkish ranging from 5 (always) to 1 (never). The mean scores in the table that are 3 or almost 3 refer to the adverb of frequency "sometimes". In this sense, it is clear in the table that participants believe Turkish should *sometimes* be used while explaining new words, giving instructions, explaining grammar, checking for understanding, giving feedback, joking with students, discussing classroom activities, and testing.

Table 5. The reasons why Turkish should be used in English language teaching

When	Because	When	Because
explaining new words	students can make connections some words may have no explanation in English there may be some differences in meaning it will be better to use bilingual dictionary students can understand well and	checking for understanding	it is of great importance for teachers to see whether students understand students may feel more relaxed to express themselves teachers can control in this way teachers need to be SURE/CERTAIN about whether they [students] understand or not

	<p>easily</p> <p>students can learn clearly</p> <p>students can keep new words in mind easily</p> <p>there may be some words with multi-meanings</p> <p>it is necessary</p> <p>some words cannot be understood</p> <p>sometimes it can be complex to understand</p> <p>it helps to clarify the meaning</p>	<p>giving feedback to individuals</p> <p>it is more effective</p> <p>teachers can make corrections easily</p> <p>students feel relaxed</p> <p>it motivates students</p> <p>students will be aware of their process</p> <p>students will see their levels</p> <p>it helps the students to find out their mistakes</p> <p>all students wonder what teacher thinks about them but they may not understand when explained in English. Therefore, it will ease their understanding</p>
<p>explaining grammatical points</p>	<p>it provides better learning</p> <p>it facilitates understanding</p> <p>students can learn completely</p> <p>it is more effective</p> <p>students may not understand in English</p> <p>it is more clear</p> <p>teacher can give similarities</p> <p>educational system (YDS exam) requires it</p> <p>grammar-oriented teaching is preferred</p> <p>it helps students to internalize the rules by comparing two languages</p> <p>students cannot grab the point if it is not taught in L1</p> <p>grammar rules are very abstract and difficult to understand</p>	<p>joking with students</p> <p>students can get bored</p> <p>it helps students to feel relax</p> <p>it makes lessons enjoyable</p> <p>their sense of humor is different</p> <p>it increases interaction between student and teacher</p> <p>students may not understand jokes in English</p> <p>it makes students relax</p> <p>it is more enjoyable</p> <p>jokes in English may not be understood</p> <p>some expressions can be meaningful only when told in the native language</p>
<p>giving instructions about activities</p>	<p>students may not understand in English</p> <p>it can be more complicated</p> <p>students should understand clearly</p> <p>they may fail if they do not understand</p> <p>they should know what to do</p> <p>they can be easily-involved</p> <p>it saves time</p>	<p>discussing classroom methods</p> <p>it provides feedback</p> <p>it is more effective</p> <p>sometimes students' level may be lower</p> <p>they can express themselves comfortably</p> <p>[English] language competence of learners may not be adequate for discussion.</p>

instructions are so important for classroom management	testing (e.g., doing translation tests)	there are generally written exams rather than oral exams
it prevents misunderstanding		teachers can see the students' levels
some students may not understand and thus cannot participate in activities		if teachers explain what the students are required to do, it will be easier
If students do not understand the instructions how can they do the instructions?		for the exams in Turkey (YDS, LYS) translation is very important
If students do not understand them, they may have some problems		

In Table 4, it can be seen that the students advocating Turkish use in English classroom believe that Turkish should *sometimes* be used while explaining new words ($M=3.06$, $SD=1.10$). In this sense, most of them pointed out that when they first encounter a word, it may be difficult to understand its meaning in English particularly for those at lower-level of English proficiency; instead, if it is explained in Turkish, every student can easily understand its meaning. The following responses below summarize the overall responses in this category:

...because students can understand well and easily (P-281).

...because it helps to clarify the meaning (P-194).

Likewise, they are of the opinion that teachers should *sometimes* use Turkish while explaining grammatical points ($M=3.41$, $SD=1.00$). They have clearly explained that since some grammatical structures in English are too complex and also different from those in Turkish, students can understand easily when grammatical points are explained in Turkish. Furthermore, they believe that structures explained in English may not be comprehensible. As stated in the examples below, most of the participants advocate the use of Turkish particularly while teaching grammar:

...because some structures may not be understood well if not explained in Turkish (P-358).

...because it facilitates learning (P-363).

As for the third category - giving instructions, they similarly support that instructions should be *sometimes* given in Turkish since they will be understood more easily and effectively ($M=2.67$, $SD=1.12$). In addition, they also stated that the students should completely understand the instructions in order to do them; if they do not, they could not participate in activities, so they will probably remain passive during the class. It was worded by some students as follows:

...because they may fail [in fulfilling the instructions] if they do not understand (P-354).

...because instructions are so important for classroom management (P-371).

The participants also believe that Turkish should be *sometimes* used when teachers need to check for understanding ($M=2.88$, $SD=1.27$). As seen in their responses, why they believe so probably results from the fact that it is probably the easiest way to see whether they understand. In addition, they assume that if students use their mother tongue, they will probably easily express themselves or ask questions. The following explanations by student teachers illustrate this case:

...because teachers need to be sure/certain about whether they [students] understand or not (P-18).

... because students may feel more relaxed to express themselves (P-250).

In addition, according to the participants, teachers should *sometimes* give feedback in Turkish since it will more easily motivate students and enable them to see their mistakes and proficiency levels ($M=2.78$, $SD=1.14$). That is clear in the following extract:

...because all students wonder about what teacher thinks about them. However, they may not understand when it is explained in English. Therefore, it [the use of Turkish] will ease their understanding (P-2).

It is clear in Table 4 that the students are of the opinion that Turkish should be *sometimes* used while joking ($M=2.76$, $SD=1.09$). They assert that in order to perpetuate the attention of students, the classroom atmosphere should be enjoyable and the jokes particularly made in mother tongue may be very helpful to achieve it. As

seen in the following example, they believe that if jokes are made in English, they may not be understood and thus do not serve their aims.

... because some expressions can be meaningful only when told in the native language (P-189).

Furthermore, while discussing methods in the classroom, the participants also support the occasional use of Turkish ($M=2.96$, $SD=1.06$). In this sense, the participants stated that students might not be good enough to discuss the methods in English, but they can provide feedback best in their native language. The following example clearly illustrates this case:

... because [English] language competence of learners may not be adequate for discussion (P-247).

Finally, the students believe that Turkish is *sometimes* necessary while testing particularly due to the educational systems applied in Turkey where grammar-oriented teaching is generally preferred and exams are mostly given in the written form ($M=2.85$, $SD=1.17$). However, they also stated that if it is not a translation test, there is no need to use Turkish. However, in the case of translation, bilingual application is a must. As seen in the extract from a student, for both instructions of the exams and translation exams, L1 will be very helpful:

...because if teachers explain what the students are required to do in L1, it will be easier to understand (P-46).

Moreover, in addition to the specific situations in the questionnaire, three participants also added three new situations. They believe that while clarifying discipline problems, giving assignments, and explaining idioms teachers can use Turkish to enable students to comprehend clearly. However, they did not give any explanations for these situations.

The results of the research indicate that whereas most of the participants advocate the use of Turkish in English classes particularly when explaining new words, giving instructions, explaining grammar, checking for understanding, giving feedback, joking with students, discussing classroom activities, and testing, the others support the avoidance of its use since they think it may decrease the chance of exposure to the target language. In other words, most of the prospective teachers had positive attitudes towards Turkish L1 use while teaching English and these findings seem to be consistent with those of Al-Nofaie (2010), Levine (2003), Qian et al. (2009), and Alshammari (2011) which indicated that both teachers and students participating in their studies responded to L1 use positively.

Confirming Levine (2003)'s study on students and teachers' attitudes toward the use of target language proposing that L1 is more likely to be used particularly while discussing grammar, course policies, tests or class assignments, the result pointed out that explaining grammatical structures will be more effective since it is believed to pave the way for learning. Similar results are also suggested by Mirza, et al. (2012) who revealed that teachers switch to their L1 (Bangla) in English classes particularly when explaining difficult grammatical rules, presenting new vocabulary, giving instructions, etc. Furthermore, it can be said that the results of the study also echo those of Sali's study (2014) pointing out that Turkish teachers of English in secondary schools use Turkish both for academic (such as explaining aspects of English, translating words and sentences, discussing learning and checking comprehension etc.) and managerial (giving instructions, managing discipline etc.) functions.

In addition, as also pointed out by Qian et al. (2009), another striking role of L1 use, if used in a suitable quantity, is that it fosters student-teacher interaction. According to the findings of this study, in compatible with Lo (2015) illustrating that L1 is more preferred by the teachers while teaching students with low L2 proficiency and discussing classroom activities or methods, L1 use may also encourage those students who do not rely on their L2 proficiency to express themselves. It can be also inferred from the explanations that lack of confidence in using target language may also urge both teachers and students to switch their first language. Similarly, in his study on student teachers' attitudes toward the use of target language, Bateman (2008) illustrated that student teachers appeared pusillanimous with the fear of losing control of the classroom or making mistakes in front of the students, particularly when there are native students in class.

Furthermore, it is also clear that since L1 use may lead the students to initiate and sustain verbal interaction, its use in classroom activities, particularly in group or pair works, is thought to be effective. That is also supported by Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) who suggest that teachers should consider L1 use "a normal psychological process" rather than prohibiting its use in an L2 class (p.768). In compatible with Scott and Fuente (2008) who proposed that exclusive use of L2 may build a barrier for learning as it will probably increase cognitive demands in tasks, particularly in form-focused tasks, it was also pointed out that L1 use may reduce cognitive overload, sustain interaction, and naturally foster language development. Furthermore, the findings revealed that L1 use may also have a positive role in reducing classroom anxiety and thus in creating a classroom atmosphere where there is a positive relationship between students and teacher and almost all students are eager to participate in

activities. Similar conclusions were also obtained by Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008).

4. Conclusion

The present study has investigated the views of Turkish prospective teachers at the ELT department on the use of Turkish while teaching English. The results revealed that most of the participants advocate Turkish use in English classes. The main reason suggested by the participants is that since Turkish is their mother tongue, it will ease the process and their understanding. Furthermore, they also believe that using Turkish will be more effective particularly in some situations. In this sense, they are of the opinion that Turkish should be sometimes switched to while explaining a new word, giving instructions, explaining grammatical structures, checking understanding, providing feedback, joking and discussing classroom activities with students, and testing. On the other hand, there are also participants who believe that using Turkish in English classes is not beneficial; rather, it decreases their chance to speak and listen to English. As they learn it in a country where English is almost never spoken, the only place to practice it is, surely, the class. Therefore, they suggested that Turkish use should be avoided as much as possible in English classes.

As Levine (2003) stated, year of instruction, proficiency level of target language, level of motivation, and the frequency of strategies on L2 use all have a great role in L2 use during English classes. In this sense, L1 use may yield positive results while teaching to students with low-level of proficiency or motivation whereas continuous use of target language may increase their anxiety and thus lead them to develop a negative attitude towards the language. It can be concluded that language teachers may take advantage of L1 use, which is “a naturally occurring phenomenon” (Moore, 2013, p. 251) in language classes, rather than completely prohibiting its use in class. Indeed, rather than simply suggesting that L1 use may be beneficial or a hindrance in language teaching process, we reached a conclusion that the one who will make decision on when to use which language is absolutely the teacher who knows the students, their needs, and their learning strategies, which is also asserted by Copland and Neokleous (2010).

Besides confirming previous research findings, the study also contributes additional evidence on why L1 should be used in L2 classes. However, it has some limitations particularly in terms of participants and data collection instruments. Firstly, the data were collected from 374 student teachers from four universities and that may be a very limited number for such a study to make generalizations over Turkish context. Secondly, as a data collection instrument, just a questionnaire was conducted. Finally, the data were collected from only student teachers but the perspectives of teachers and instructors were unfortunately disregarded. Further studies with similar topics need to be conducted with extra tools for data collection such as interviews and observation in different contexts in order to achieve a clearer understanding of attitudes toward L1 use in L2 teaching.

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Note: Although English is taught as a foreign language in Turkey, we used the term “L2” (second language) instead of FL (foreign language) since it is not used so common as L2 in relevant literature.

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